Major Preston Wickliffe — Friend of Mary Todd — Drawer 2, Mary Todd-Youth

71.2001.013.04420

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Mary Todd Lincoln

Margaret Preston Wickliffe

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

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The Filson Club
INCORPORATED

ORGANIZED MAY 15, 1884, FOR COLLECTING, PRESERVING, AND PUBLISHING HISTORICAL MATERIAL, ESPECIALLY THAT PERTAINING TO KENTUCKY

118 WEST BRECKINRIDGE STREET

LOUISVILLE 3, KENTUCKY

March 29, 1946

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Dr. Louis A. Warren
Lincoln National Life Foundation
Fort Wayne, Indiana

Dear Doctor:

Your letter with its interesting story about Mary Todd's prophetic intentions (I don't suppose those two words were ever before so used) has been received and I shall try to use it. However, it is too late to make inquiries about the letter before the magazine article is printed since the article is practically in the press.

Your letter reminds me of a Mary Todd story that has never been told. Major William Daveiss of Harrodsburg while studying law at Transylvania, boarded in the Todd family and was very fond of Mary. I don't mean that he was in love with her but that he appreciated her and enjoyed her. He held a fine social position in the State, being the son of Capt. Samuel Daveiss, a noted lawyer and progressive citizen and the nephew of Joseph Hamilton Daveiss. He was noted for the witty remarks he would ~~say~~ make, for the queer twist he could give an ordinary remark, and was constantly in demand as an after dinner speaker. On one occasion when he and Mrs. Lincoln were guests at the same table the Major was being twitted to bring out his delightful humor and looking across at Mrs. Lincoln he said: "Mary, if I had known that you were goint to marry a President, I would have married you myself."

Major Daveiss was my wife's grandfather and amongst the many witticisms of his treasured by the family, this was the one most often quoted. It was told me by his wife, the late Maria T. Daveiss, author of the History of Mercer and Boyle Counties.

Yours truly,

Lucien Beckner

Lucien Beckner
Secretary

LB:td

Mary Todd

April 3, 1946

Mr. Lucien Beckner, Secretary
Filson Club
118 West Breckinridge St.
Louisville, 3, Kentucky

My dear Mr. Beckner:

The story about Major William Daveiss is a gem and I certainly shall use it. Thanks for calling it to my attention.

With reference to the Mary Todd letter which apparently is in the papers of the President, My thought was that you might be able to locate it before the Filson Club Magazine has very wide circulation. After it comes out
and some one may snatch it away from Kentucky. If Mary Todd Lincoln gives a description of Abraham Lincoln in 1840, it would be impossible to figure the value of such a letter and I hope that you or some of your staff there may try and appropriate it before someone else is successful in acquiring it.

Very truly yours,

LAW:EB

Director

PRESTON DAVIE
420 PARK AVENUE
NEW YORK 22, N. Y.
MURRAY HILL 8-6181

November 19, 1952

Dr. Louis A. Warren
Directot The Lincoln National Life Foundatipn
Fort Wayne, Indiana

Dear Dr. Warren:

I have your letter of October 20th, 1952, enclosing your brochure "The Woman in Lincoln's Life", repr.nted from the Filson Club Quaterly 1946. Also photostat of an undated newspaper clipping, apparently from the "Philadelphia Times" written from White Sulphur Springs by a lady correspondent reporting reminiscences of Mary Todd Lincoln related there by Mrs. William Preston of Lexington, Kentucky, and mentioning a letter she had received many years earlier from Mrs. Lincoln.

Your letter asks if I have this letter of Mrs. Lincoln in my family papers. A check of these shows it is not among them. Possibly it may be among papers of Mrs. William Preston Johnston(a grandaughter of Mr. & Mrs. William Preston) or she may know of its whereabouts. Her address is: Bryan Station Road, Box 324, Lexington, Kentucky.

I read your brochure and the newspaper clipping with much interest. The account of Mrs. Preston's (my maternal grandmother) and Mary Todd Lincoln's friendship and association is familiar; as a boy I heard it from my grandmother Mrs. William Preston, and also on a number of other occasions from her daughter, my mother, (Margaret Howard Preston, wife of George Montgomery Davie, my father).

The close association and friendship between Mary Todd Lincoln and Mrs. William Preston as I heard it related by both Mrs. Preston and my mother, varied in a few minor details only from the account in your brochure, but contains additions which may possibly be of interest as supplements to your Lincolniana. I therefore add them to this letter on this chance.

Mrs. William Preston whose reminiscences concerning Mary Todd Lincoln, wife of President Lincoln, are reported in the newspaper clipping enclosed in your letter to me, was Margaret Preston Wickliffe, daughter of Robert Wickliffe, Sr.

and hsi wife Mary Preston Howard, of "Wickcliffe Place" Lexington, Kentucky.

The above Robert Wickeliffe Sr. was of the fifth generation in descent from David Wickeliffe (Wickelif) progenitor in America of this family seated from the time of Henry I at Wycliffe, Richmondshire, Engalnd, who came to the Proprietary Of Maryland in the first half on the 17th century where he served as a member of the Maryland Assembly from St. George's Hundred 1636-43, in which latter year he died. His son, David Wickeliffe, born in Maryland, changed ~~his address by moving~~ his residence to the adjoining Colony of Virginia, co. Westmoreland and by his wife, Mary Sisson, widow of Lewis Nicholas, whom he married July 25th 1677 was father of two sons David, and Robert Wickeliffe (born circa 1680. Died 1759). The latter of Westmoreland co., Va. married Elizabeth, daughter of Mansford Arrington of Prince William co.Va. Their eldest son Charles Wickeliffe father of Robert Wickeliffe with whom we are concerned here, married 1774 Lydia daughter of Martin D. Hardin of Prince William co. Va., and his wife Lydia Waters, of Farquier co., Va., the latter born 1748. Charles Wickeliffe in 1780 changed his residence from co. Westmoreland, Va. to that part of Virginia which subsequently became the Commonwealth of Kentucky, where he had received a land bounty for his military services in the Revolutionary War, and where he also acquired additional lands.

Charles Wickeliffe had issue three sons, Nathaniel Wickcliffe, Robert Wickeliffe, and Charles Anderson Wickeliffe. Of these Robert Wickeliffe who is our concern here, and his brother Charkes Anderson Wickeliffe became notable figures in Kentucky in their generation. The latter whose estate was "Wickland" in what is now Bardstown Kentucky was a member of the U.S. House of Reprresentatives 1823-34; Governor of Kentucky 1829; Postmaster-General 1841-5 in the Cabinet of President Polk; etc.

Robert Wickeliffe Sr., his elder brother, of Wickeliffe Place, Lexington, Kentucky, and father of Margaret Preston Wickeliffe, the friend of Mary Todd, wife of President Lincoln, was possessed of a substantial fortune which included some 30,000 acres of lands and many slaves. Less actively interested in holding political office than his brother Governor Charles Anderson Wickeliffe, nevertheless Robert Wickeliffe Sr. had wide influence in the State. He was a leading member of the Kentucky Bar, and besides his legal attainments, was a man of considerable erudition; possessed an extensive library; and was conversant with the Greek and Latin classics to an unusual extent, as his annotations in some of

As the story has been related to me by my mother and her mother my grandmother, Mrs. William Preston (Margaret Preston Wickcliffe - Mary Todd's friend) Mary Todd spent several of her girlhood years with Margaret Preston Wickcliffe at "Wickcliffe Place" in Lexington, Kentucky, while both girls were attending Madame Charlotte Mentelle's school there.

How this came about was related to me as follows. Mary Todd's father, John Smith Todd, was deeply in love with his first wife. Left a widower while his younger children were still infants, his second marriage was in some measure one of convenience to aid him in his children's proper rearing and care. Realization of this by his second wife created an atmosphere in John Todd's home that caused his younger children as they matured to prefer living with their adult married sisters some of whom resided at Springfield, Illinois. In the case of Mary Todd who was her father's next to youngest child, the situation described above eventuated in her residing with Margaret Preston Wickcliffe in her father Robert Wickcliffe Sr.'s home during the later years when both were attending Madame Charlotte Mentelle's school; after which Mary Todd left the Wickcliffe home and resided with an elder sister Mrs. Ninian Edwards in Springfield, Illinois.

Whether, as related to me, Mary Todd first met Mr. Lincoln while on a visit to her married sister at Springfield; or whether their first meeting was in Lexington while Mary Todd was residing with the Wickcliffe family, I do not remember; but I do recall the statement that Mr. Lincoln visited Lexington, Kentucky, on several occasions, and while there was a frequent caller at the Wickcliffe home where he 'paid court' to Mary Todd.

In this connection I also recall the following anecdote: On one occasion the children in the Wickcliffe household were teasing one another about their respective beaux and sweethearts. Mary Todd came in for her share of the teasing by reason of the attention she was receiving from Mr. Lincoln. Fun was poked at his carelessness in his attire and his grooming; and he was irreverently dubbed "Mary Todd's spook", much to the latter's discomfiture. Mrs. Wickcliffe (Robert Wickcliffe's second wife, the child of Governor John Todd, whom the children called 'mother' and to whom they were all devoted) coming to Mary Todd's rescue, remarked pointedly that although Mr. Lincoln was not a 'man of fashion' like a number of the young 'Dandies' whose visits to the Wickcliffe home caused such "flurries", his mind was occupied with weightier matters than his personal appearance; and in her judgement possessed mental qualities and force of character that would 'carry him far'.

After completing their schooling at Madame Mentelle's in Lexington, the march of events carried the two friends, Mary Todd and Margaret Preston Wickcliffe, into widely different fields and careers.

Mary Todd went to live with her elder married sister Mrs. Ninian Edwards in Springfield, Illinois, where she married Mr. Lincoln. Their early deprivations and hardships; Mr. Lincoln's hard-won struggle to success; and epic place in history; of course require no further mention here.

Margaret Howard Wickcliffe after attending a "finishing school" in Philadelphia conducted by Madame Seguin and then in great vogue, married her distant cousin, William Preston. The latter after attending Yale and Harvard, returned to Kentucky, was admitted to the bar, and married his distant cousin, Margaret Preston Wickcliffe. On the outbreak of the Mexican War in 1847 Preston served in the "Orphan Brigade" of Kentucky troops in which he attained the rank of Lieut.-Colonel. After that event, returning to Kentucky he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and while so serving was appointed U.S. Minister to Spain by his distant kinsman President Buchanan. While serving in this post his wife's father, Robert Wickcliffe Sr. died in 1859 without surviving male issue; one of his unmarried sons, Charles, was killed in a duel; another son, Howard, died unmarried; and his remaining son, Robert Wickcliffe Jr., who served as a young man as Attache to the U.S. Legation in Spain and as Charge d'Affaires at Sardinia, and who married the Baroness de Roode of Belgium, also predeceased his father, without surviving issue. As a result William Preston's wife and her two sisters came into substantial inheritances; the "Wickcliffe Place" residence in Lexington, with other property descending to William Preston's wife, where they established their permanent residence.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Kentucky was a border state and the allegiances of the many families there were sharply divided by that conflict. Fathers, sons, and brothers in numerous instances served on opposite sides. Like his brother-in-law General Albert Sydney Johnston, and cousin ex-Vice President of the U.S. John C. Breckenridge (who had run unsuccessfully as a candidate for President of the U.S. against Lincoln), William Preston entered the military forces of the Confederacy, and participated in a number of engagements (his brother-in-law Albert Sidney Johnston fatally wounded while commanding the Confederate forces at the Battle of Shiloh died in his arms on the battlefield).

Early in the Civil War a military regulation was put in force by the Union Army forces in Kentucky prohibiting wives of General Officers in the Confederacy from residing in certain interdicted areas in Kentucky, including the area that embraced Lexington, as a precaution against information being transmitted to the enemy. In these circumstances, her husband being then on active service as a Brigadier General in the Confederate Forces, Mrs. Preston left Kentucky, and with her children took up residence in Montreal, Canada. While there Mrs. Preston got word that her husband had been gravely wounded in the seige if Vicksburg. Leaving her children in the care of friends in Montreal, Mrs. Preston endeavoring to reach her husband by the quickest means, took passage on a Cunard vessel bound for Boston, hoping to proceed South from there, pass through the Union lines, and reach her husband. Her departure from Canada was reported by Federal

agents there however, and when the vessel arrived off Boston its Captain learned Federal Agents were waiting at that port to interrogate, and possibly detain her. Also it was pointed out that should she land in Boston, it was unlikely she would be permitted to proceed south and pass through the Federal lines into the Confederacy. Also that once landed on U.S. soil, not only were her chances remote of getting through the Federal lines to join her husband, but also she subsequently might be unable to obtain a passport or visa essential to leave the U.S. and return to Canada where her children were.

In this dilemma, through the good offices of the Captain, Mrs. Preston was able to have a telegram sent ashore and transmitted to her friend Mary Todd Lincoln in the White House, explaining her predicament, and asking Mrs. Lincoln's aid in obtaining from President Lincoln permission to pass through the Federal lines and join her husband. Magnanimously, the Captain of the vessel also delayed docking pending an answer to Mrs. Preston's telegram so that Mrs. Preston could not be put under detention by the Federal authorities at Boston. An answer was received by Mrs. Preston two days later, advising necessary orders had been issued permitting Mrs. Preston's safe-conduct through the Federal lines, ending with a humorous touch characteristic of Mary Todd Lincoln, explaining her delay in answering was because regulations governing passes through Federal lines had recently been tightened, and she had been compelled to keep President Lincoln awake most of the night persuading him to grant the request. The finale to this episode was anticlimactic; Mrs. Preston got through the lines, found her husband was only slightly rather than gravely wounded, and was already back in field service, affording Mrs. Preston only a brief opportunity to be with him. Accordingly, she hurried back to Montreal to care for their children, where she remained until the close of the war.

Her husband, William Preston, achieved some distinction in his military service, attaining to the rank of Major-General and serving in a number of important engagements. The following describes the part he played in the important battle of Chicamauga, September 1863 written by General Basil W . Duke, (himself a noted cavalry leader who commanded Morgan's cavalry after the death of General Morgan who organized it). General Duke was an authority on the history of the Civil War, and in his later years was appointed Commissioner of Civil War Memorial Grounds and Monuments, by President Theodore Roosevelt. ("Reminiscences of General Basil W. Duke. Pages 210-11. Published by Doubleday, Page & Company. Garden City, New York.).

> "Preston's division was in Buckner's corps on the Confederate left, resting on the Chicamauga near Lee and Gordons mill. It was attacked and hotly engaged on the 19th, but repulsed the enemy with smart loss, and participated on the 20th, in the afternoon, in the heavy fighting in the complete defeat and rout of the Federal forces upon that part of th field. Frequent and

complimentary mention is made in the various Confederate accounts of the battle of the services rendered by Preston towards its close, when the reiterated and vigorous assaults made on Thomas had uncovered the Chattanooga Road and will-nigh driven him from his position. Rosecrans was compelled to support him with troops who were greatly needed in other quarters. Longstreet, utilizing his opportunity struck and crushed the Federal right, and pressing his advantage swept down the line toward the Federal centre and left. This movement completed the defeat of the enemy and no Confederate Division Commander contributed more to its successful result than Preston. He renewed the attack previously unsuccessful on the hills near the Snodgrass house, where Granger and Steedman were making a resolute stand to protect the Federal retreat and prevent the rout which in large measure it became. They were strongly posted and well provided with artillery and had repulsed more than one onset.

Preston had been ordered to support Hindman and McLaws, but ascertaining that he could take the enemy in flank by moving along a certain ravine did so upon his own responsibility. The movement was no less intelligent than bold, and Preston, after desperate and bloody work on both sides dislodged the Federals from the position and drove them from the field. His division fired perhaps, the last shots of the battle after the night had fallen.

Preston did not win his victory without cost; one of his regiments - the sixty-third Tennessee of Gracie's brigade - lost in killed and wounded two hundred and two out of an aggregate effective of four hundred and four. He inflicted severe loss on the enemy, and captured the Eighty-ninth Ohio, the Twenty-second Michigan and part of the Twenty-first Ohio regiments."

By late 1864 the fortunes of the Confederacy were rapidly waning, and its leaders - secretly - were giving serious thought to the future fate of those then serving it. In the likely event of its defeat and collapse, would they be treated as criminally punishable insurrectionists; or as non-criminal nationals of a defeated sovereign State? Federal political opinion in some quarters was so acrimoniously vociferous in favor of the criminal status, that means of self preservation should obviously be planned against this extremity. The most logical answer to the problem was to find some place of refuge; and since any mass escape by water was barred by the Federal naval blockade, the most feasible answer seemed to be a mass migration of Confederate troops to Mexico.

Mexico it will be recalled was then under the tenuous rule of an Emperor, the Hapsburg Maximilian, placed there through the machinations and military support of some European powers headed by the French Emperor Napoleon III, at a time when the United States was too deeply involved in the Civil War struggle to offer resistance to this move of European powers to win a large southern segment of the North American continent. The Emperor Maximilian's attempts, backed by Napoleon III, to maintain his Mexican Empire was meeting increasing resistance from the native Mexicans; and as the fortunes of the Federal side in the Civil War in the United States brightened, the support of Maximilian by Napoleon III became progressively more cautious and vacillating. In these circumstances the advantages that would accrue to Maximilian in his efforts to maintain his tottering Mexican throne by the added strength and aid of such a still formidable force of seasoned and effective fighters as the Confederates, would have been incalculably great.

Therefore the Confederate Government decided to send an emissary with the rank of Minister - secretly - to the Emperor Maximilian to ascertain whether in case the events unfavorable to the Confederates mentioned above occurred, the military forces of the Confederacy in whole or part would be accepted into Mexico; and if so what inducements would be offered for this migration. General William Preston was chosen to head this confidential mission.

Because of the French naval blockade, the only practicable route for this mission to reach Mexico and its capitol was overland through some wild Mexican country infested with bandits and guerrila forces hostile to the Maximilian government, some of which were of sizeable numbers.

At one place on the journey, General Preston and the small escort accompanying him were surrounded by one of these bandit groups which hopelessly outnumbered them. The situation for a time appeared decidedly uncomfortable. A parley with Cortinas, the bandit leader, was held. On the way to the parley, General Preston and those with him passed the body of a French officer hanging from a tree with his throat slit from ear to ear, who had commanded a patrol detachment of the Maximilian forces that had been captured a day or two before; a spectacle which failed to enliven the spirits of the Confederate parley-party. However, General Preston, who spoke Spanish with some fluency as a result of his residence in Spain, by appealing to Cortina's pride through referring to them both as belonging to the honorable profession of arms; and by convincing him the Confederates were not connected with the Maximilian forces, managed to effect not only a friendly "accomodacion" for a less than hoped for tribute fee; but also obtained a safe conduct through the wide region over which Cortinas held sway; and was given hospitable entertainment.

On arrival at the Mexican Capitol, General Preston found the Maximilian government so dependent on French troops for its continued survival, and under the necessity of referring all matters beyond those of local administration to Napoleon III in France, that it was futile to attempt to accomplish the purposes of his mission in Mexico. Therefore an opportunity presenting itself, he took passage on a vessel bound for England, intending to proceed from there to France, where he would receive further instructions from the Confederate Government as to what if any proposals it desired to have presented concerning the Mexican project to Napoleon III.

On the arrival of his vessel in England however, he was met by the crushing news that General Lee had surrendered at Appamatox, April 9th; that President Lincoln had been assassinated April 15th; that General Joseph E. Johnston had surrendered the last Confederate Army April 26th; and that the Confederate Government had collapsed.

In the confusion that followed the collapse of the Federal Government, slow and sometimes conflicting reports reached England as to what the attitude of the Federal Government would be towards ex officials and general officers of the defunct Confederate Government. Pending decision of this matter, General Preston remained in England until it became clear that the General Officers of the Confederate Army would not be held punishable as insurrectionists. Whereupon, he returned to the United States, and to his home in Lexington, Kentucky, where his wife and childred had preceded him.

On resuming status as a private citizen, General Preston bent his energies to putting hispersonal affairs in order. He and Mrs, Preston continued to make "Wickliffe Place", that had survived the war intact, their permanent residence during the rest of their lives. Their estates, though diminished by the war, still sufficed to maintain them in comfort although on a less spacious scale, due largely to the fact that Kentucky where much of their property was situated although a border state suffered less from the ravages of war than the Southern states. General Preston's public career came to a close after the Civil War except for one term served in the State Legislature, and his becoming a delegate to the Democratic Convention of 1880 in which he was an earnest advocate for the nomination of his friend of long-standing, Samuel J. Tilden, as its candidate for the Presidency.

General William Preston died at "Wickliffe Place", Lexington, survived by his wife, one son, and five daughters. Margaret Wickliffe Preston, his wife (the friend of Mrs. Lincoln) died there in 1895. Both are buried at Cave Hill Cemetery, Louisville, Kentucky.

I recall hearing from Mrs. Preston (my grandmother) and her daughter (my mother) one other incident in the friendship between Mrs. Preston and Mrs. Lincoln that may be of sufficient interest for inclusion in your Lincoln data, and which I shall therefor now endeavor to relate after the following prefatory comments.

It is, I believe, now well known that during the later years of President Lincoln's administration, Mrs. Lincoln began to manifest progressive symptoms of that mental aberration which later made it necessary for her own safety that her son, Robert Todd Lincoln, place her in a neuropathic institution at Batavia, Illinois as your brochure points out. One symptom of this mental disorder as I heard the story, and as I believe it is also now known, was a growing obsession of Mrs. Lincoln that in the event her husband predeceased her, she and her child would be left financially destitute and facing dire poverty. This obsession as I heard it related, so preyed upon her afflicted mind - its condition aggravated by the profound grief she suffered upon the death of her second son - that it resulted in her doing on occasions, eccentric things which brought public criticism from those unaware of her mental aberration; one of these criticisms being that she was engaging in "influence peddling".

Even as late as Mrs. Lincoln's generation, insanity was I believe regarded as having some sort of stigma attached to it. Certainly a generation or so earlier it was not uncommon for victims of insanity to be segregated in solitary confinement, and in too many instances to be treated more like animals than human beings; even mention of those thus afflicted being avoided as something shameful.

Public criticisms of Mrs. Lincoln's increasing eccentricities and the trying situations some of these created, must have made President Lincoln aware of her mental affliction, and the resulting burden of sorrow it imposed upon him may be easily imagined. I am not a close student of President Lincoln's career, but if I remember correctly he remained silent under thsee criticisms. A word from him disclosing Mrs. Lincoln's affliction would of course have silenced her detractors, but with equal certainty would have inflicted crushing humiliation upon her and might have completely unseated her mind. As I recall President Lincoln's attitude towards Mrs. Lincoln as recorded by many biographers was unfailingly protective and tender, although Herndon and some others criticized her severely. The manner in which he bore this private grief, in addition to the vast burdens of his office, has always seemed to me to cap the greatness of his stature.

With the foregoing by way of introduction, the incident I am endeavoring to relate, as told to me by my grandmother, Mrs. Preston, and her daughter, my mother, was as follows:

After her husband's assassination, while she was living with her son, Robert Todd Lincoln, in Chicago, as your brochure points out, Mrs. Lincoln's mental ailment progressed to such an acute stage that it became necessary for her own safety to place her in a neuropathic

institution.

While in the institution, her mental aberration caused Mrs. Lincoln to make an unsuccessful attempt to leap from a window. An account of this found its way into a Chicago newspaper, and the article recording it also resurrected instances, true or alleged, of Mrs. Lincoln's eccentric acts while in The White House, including the "patronage peddling" charges, written in an unsympathetic and wounding vein.

When this article was brought to Mrs. Preston's attention, it moved her to write a letter of protest to the owner or editor of the newspaper with whom she happened to be acquainted. In it Mrs. Preston referred to her own long and close friendship with Mrs. Lincoln from early childhood; affirmed that she had always, until stricken by her mental affliction, been possessed of the highest integrity and standards; called attention to the great strains Mrs. Lincoln had undergone which could scarcely have failed to aggravate her mental ailment; pointed out how cruelly she had been misunderstood and maligned; and ended her letter by suggesting that in common decency some redress for the wounding newspaper article should be made. As I recall the facts related to me, either Mrs. Preston's letter, or a second article modifying or retracting portions of the original article, was published in a subsequent issue of the same newspaper.

Tending to confirm this last, is the statement I distinctly recall Mrs. Preston making to my mother in discussing this incident, that she received a touching letter from Mrs. Lincoln's son, Robert Todd Lincoln, referring to the long friendship he was familiar with between his mother and Mrs. Preston; expressing his gratitude for Mrs. Preston's defense of his mother, for whom he affirmed his own great devotion; and commenting with some bitterness on the injustice of the criticisms by her detractors. I have always heard that Robert Todd Lincoln was almost morbidly sensitive over the injustice done his mother's memory.

I have not attempted to verify the above incident, but imagine if the matter were considered of sufficient interest to you or any biographer of Mrs. Lincoln, a check of the Chicago newspapers of the period would affirm or disaffirm the correctness of what I have written.

With all the exhaustive research on the subject of President Lincoln, and the many published biorgraphies, it is indeed strange, as your brochure points out, how little attention has been paid to the part played by Mrs. Lincoln - during the nearly twenty formative years they were married before he became President and she was stricken - in molding him into what he was when he went into the White House. Also efforts on the part of his biographers to outvie one another in interpreting and "apotheosizing" Lincoln whose greatness makes such literary gilding merely banal, at the same time disappointingly leaves Mrs. Lincoln's memory under a cloud of censure. One cannot help but feel that President Lincoln himself would have been the first to resent this.

May I express the hope, Doctor Warren, that you will expand your brochure into a definitive biography of Mary Todd Lincoln. Such an addition to our history seems to me greatly needed to correct widespread misconceptions of Mrs. Linclon which still persist. I have not read her biography by Evans mentioned in your brochure, but its public impact does not appear to have been sufficient to have corrected these misconceptions.

In my anxiety to make amends for not being able to furnish you the Mary Todd letter you are looking for, I have inflicted upon you an excruciatingly long letter. My apology is the hope that what I have written may supply you with one or two items worth salvaging for your Lincolniana.

Sincerely yours,

PRESTON DAVIE

P.S. Should anyone consulting your records be interested in the family of the friend, Margaret Preston Wickliffe, or wish to verify the facts I've mentioned in this letter concerning that family - I suggest as reference " A Geneology and Historical Account of the Throckmorton Family in England and the United States With Brief Notes on Some of the Allied Families". Page 388 et seq. "Wickliffe Excursus". By C. Wickliffe Throckmorton. Printed 1930. Old Dominion Press. Richmond, Va., U.S.A.

Incidentally should such a biographer be interested in illustrations, the Kentucky artist, Matthew Harris Jouett, painted a number of oil portraits of the Wickliffe family including a portrait of Robert Wickliffe, Sr.; of his second wife, Mrs. Irvine (daughter of John Todd); and of Robert Wickliffe Sr.'s daughter, Margaret Wickliffe (Mrs. Lincoln's friend). This last showing her as a young girl is considered one of the best examples of Jouett's work. They are all now owned by my cousin, Colonel Wickliffe Preston Draper, here in New York. The portrait of Robert Wickliffe's second wife, Mary Todd Irvine, is also considered one of Jouett's best examples. A "Catalog of All Known Paintings by Matthew Harris Jouett" by Mrs. William H. Martin, was published by J.B. Speed Memorial Museum in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1939, which, although it contains a number of errors, is the most inclusive catalog I have seen yet.

You are doubtless already familiar with the collection of Lincoln letters and documents owned by my friend, the late Dr. Rosenbach of Philadelphia. In this extensive collection he kindly showed me one day after lunching with him at his place in New York, I recall being much interested at that time in some letters from Lincoln to U.S. Senator William Campbell Preston of South Carolina, cousin of my grandfather, General William Preston (husband of Mary Todd Lincoln's friend, Margaret

Preston Wickliffe). In these letters, written from Illinois, Lincoln described the then political situation there, mentioning the urgent necessity of obtaining some Federal patronage for political workers there, and asking Senator Preston to exercise his influence in securing this. There are of course many Lincoln letters and documents on subjects of much more importance in Dr. Rosenbach's collection, which I mention here merely on the bare chance you may not be familiar with that collection.

December 16, 1952

Mrs. William Preston Johnson
Bryan Station Road
Box 324
Lexington, Kentucky

My dear Madam:

Sometime ago I was advised that Mr. Preston Davie of New York City might have in his possession a letter written by Mary Todd to her friend, Miss Wickliffe, a schoolmaid at Lexington. Mr. Davie has advised me that he does not find it among his papers and thinks possibly that it might be in your possession or you might know where it could be located.

Attached to this letter is a photostatic copy of a newspaper clipping where I first discovered the story and I am also attaching a pamphlet in which the story was used in an address before the Philson Club at Louisville.

It would be of great importance if we could know the full contents of the letter especially Mary Todd's description of Lincoln.

If the letter has been preserved we would like very much to secure a copy of it with the owner's permission.

Thank you for any assistance for you may be to help me to discover this missing letter.

I happen to be a graduate of Transylvania University so Lexington is very familiar to me and it is not difficult for me to recreate the environment in which Miss Todd and Miss Wickliffe moved during their girlhood days.

Very truly yours,

Director

LAW:jaf
Dr. Louis A. Warren

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May 24, 1961

Dr. Louis A. Warren
The Lincoln National Life Foundation
Fort Wayne, Indiana

Dear Dr. Warren:

We have talked with Mrs. Preston Johnston about the letter written by Mary Todd to Margaret Wickliffe Preston. Mrs. Johnston says that her branch of the family never had any Wickliffe papers. She suggests that Dr. Caroline Preston Scott, 328 North Limestone Street of this city, might be able to give you some information on the subject of the letter. Dr. Scott is related to the Preston and Wickliffe families and may be able to help you.

Sincerely yours,

Jacqueline Bull

Jacqueline Bull
Archivist

JB:eu

1325 Maple Avenue

June 24, 1961

Dr. Caroline Preston Scott
330 North Limestone Street
Lexington, Kentucky
Dear Dr. Scott:

For many years I have been attempting to learn if a letter which Mary Todd wrote to Margaret Preston Wickliffe about the year 1840 is still extant. Having just finished a book in which the incident is mentioned I would like very much to have a copy of the letter.

I am advised that the letter is not in the collection of Mrs Preston Johnson and in correspondence that I had with Preston Davie of New York, who I believe remembered the letter very well, he did not know where it might be found, if it still was available.

Mrs. Warren and I are both graduates of Transylvania University so we have something of an interest in the Lexington phase of the correspondence. We will deeply appreciate any assistance in locating the letter.

Very truly yours

November 26, 1952

Mr. Preston Davie
420 Park Avenue
New York, 22, New York

My dear Mr. Davie:

While of course I was greatly disappointed that the important letter about which I wrote was not found in your papers, you have greatly favored me by the very fine and helpful discussion about the Todd, Preston and Wickliffe families.

I shall take occasion to separately bind your letter with a proper index citation so that it may be available to students of Abraham Lincoln.

There will be published in February a full length biography of Mary Todd Lincoln by Mrs. James G. Randall which I am sure you will want to read as it is written objectively and from an authoritative source which Mrs. Randall has been gathering through the years. It will be widely advertised and you will have no difficulty in locating one.

I will immediately correspond with Mrs. William Preston of Lexington and I do trust that somewhere we may find the missing letter still preserved as it is of great historical value. Thank you not only for the exceedingly fine monograph you have prepared on the early atmosphere in which Mary Todd moved, but also for the address of Mrs. Preston.

Very truly yours,

LAW:mm

Director